

**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING SHOPPING AIDS AND
5 INCENTIVES TO CUSTOMERS THROUGH A COMPUTER NETWORK**

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A system and method for delivering purchasing incentives and a variety
10 of other retail shopping aids through a computer network, such as by E-mail over the
Internet or the World Wide Web. Customers (10) of retail stores can establish a bi-
directional communication link with the system, log in (16) to the system, and then elect
to browse among available purchasing incentive offers (18, 22), or elect to explore other
shopping aids, such as a shopping list generator (26), a recipe center (30), or simply
15 elect to claim a product rebate or to receive product information. If the customer elects
to have product information or rebate information delivered, only minimal customer
identification is required. For purchase incentives redeemable at retail stores, the
customer must provide identification information and must also designate a retailer (12)
at which the purchasing incentive can be exercised. For receipt of focused incentives
20 based the customer's past shopping behavior, the customer must also supply a unique
customer id., such as a check cashing card number or credit card number, used for in-
store purchases. For delivery of a product sample, the customer's name and address
must be supplied. The system merges this customer-supplied information (270) with
other purchase incentive data (272) and creates a printable graphical image of the
25 purchasing incentive (282) for transmission to the customer. In an alternate embodiment
of the invention, the purchase incentive is not transmitted directly to the customer.
Instead, the terms of the incentive are transmitted electronically to the retail store (310)
designated by the customer, who receives either a token (316) to present at the store or
an advisory message. In yet another embodiment of the invention, incentives may be
30 targeted to specific consumers based on a consumer purchase history (502), and
transmitted to consumers' computers (510) using electronic mail addresses stored in a
consumer database (506), or using a "personal page" in the computer network,
established for each consenting consumer.